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## War from the Christian Point of View

BY ERNEST H. CROSBY.

If thou detestest war, as all men should,  
Make monumental thine antipathy;  
Intoxicate thyself with loathing of it;  
Give policy's least mood of protean guile  
No quarter. Sound one note, and vary it not,  
While tumults of insidious "ifs" and "thoughts,"  
Like locust legions, loudening as they swell,  
Would buzz and hiss thee mute.

EDGAR FAWCETT.

Whenever a great accidental catastrophe occurs, involving the loss of many lives, such as the destruction by fire of the excursion steamer, the "General Slocum," near New York in the summer of 1904, or the burning of the Iroquois Theatre as the result of an explosion of gas a few months earlier at Chicago, a wave of horror passes over the country, and the shock extends even to foreign lands and awakens their sympathies. For days the newspapers are filled with heartrending accounts of the agonizing death of the victims and of the tortures of many who barely escaped with their lives.

We are horrified at these things, and yet we Christians are taking an active and voluntary part in the production of just such explosions and conflagrations. Here is a picture of one of them drawn by a newspaper correspondent:

"Amid the thrashing machinery the dead were thick. The plunging beams racked and crushed the dead and dying. In the basement of this inferno firemen — some of them were still alive — writhed amid the furious flames. Some were dead, and the fire danced over their torn bodies, wreathing the naked shapes with fire, and giving their features a look that no human being ought to gaze upon and live."

The Church thanked God for that, in the name of the Jesus who said, "Love your enemies," and two Christian admirals (or their friends) strove long and bitterly to wrest from each other the responsibility for this hideous scene! Nor is war on land any less horrible. Here is a view of the battlefield of the Atbara, in the Soudanese War of 1898, taken from an English journal:

"There were black spindle legs curled up to meet regimbleted black faces, donkeys headless and legless or sieves of shrapnel; camels with necks writhed back on to their humps rotting already in pools of blood and bile-yellow water; heads without faces, and faces without anything below, cobwebbed arms and legs and black skins grilled to crackling on smoldering palm leaf."

This is an example of Christian influence in a Mohammedan country, the result of a ferocity of which the poor donkeys and camels would have been incapable. If Jesus had said, "Blessed are the war makers," and "Hate your enemies," what better way could his followers have found to carry out his injunctions?

But, after all, these are only external things. They are the outward and visible signs of a still greater inward and spiritual horror. War means hate. If any two of us — I do not care who — should determine now at this very moment to hack or squeeze the life out of each other, we should at once, as we fell upon each other, begin to hate with a deadly, relentless hatred. Every battle gives proof of this fact. In the affair of the "Winslow," for

instance, early in the Cuban War, when a Spanish bombshell exploded on the deck of one of our gunboats, a war correspondent tells us that the men "became frantic and cursed and yelled." Lieutenant Mead adds that "the spectacle seemed to drive them crazy with the desire of banging the Spaniards off the earth." In the famous charge of the Twenty-first Lancers at Omdurman we have the same cursing and swearing, the men insisting with oaths on being led back to wreak vengeance on the enemy. The brother of General Howard of our army reports that a Christian soldier said to him (Was it General Howard himself?), "I cannot bear to go into the presence of God so angry as I always become in battle." What are we to think of the distinguished British colonel in South Africa, a favorite in the highest society and head of a crack regiment, who, when he was wounded, sat up propped against a tree and shouted out to his men to "exterminate the vermin"? or of General Baden-Powell, one of the few "heroes" that England was able to extract from her inglorious Transvaal War, who, in his book on "Scouting," says that "man-hunting" is a better game than football? or of the term "pig-sticking," commonly applied in Great Britain during the Transvaal War to a bayonet charge? Here is an extract from the letter of an English officer which was printed in the *London Times*, the organ of respectability and aristocracy and religion:

"After the enemy was driven out, one of our squadrons pursued and got right in among them in the twilight, and most excellent pig-sticking ensued for about ten minutes, the bag being about sixty."

Rudyard Kipling is the poet laureate of brute force, but he has the realistic genius which faithfully shows the loathsome characteristics of the object of his admiration. In his poem on the "Torpedo" he speaks of the "hate that backs the hand" which sends the missile on its errand of destruction. That is a line of luminous insight. What but hate could send forth such a sinister monster, the fell amphibious reptile of machines? In his "Drums of the Fore and Aft" Kipling speaks out even more plainly and distinctly. "You must employ," he says, "either blackguards or gentlemen to do butchers' work with efficiency." War is "butchers' work" then, in the words of one of its chief champions, and the blackguard shares with the gentleman a special aptitude for it! It is hardly to be supposed that the blackguard becomes a gentleman on the battlefield: we must conclude, therefore, that the gentleman becomes a blackguard. And that this is the case we are assured by a letter from a war correspondent in South Africa copied from an English newspaper in the *New York Times*; and he tells us incidentally that he has passed his entire life among soldiers. Here are his words:

"War raises to the surface the worst passions and vices of men, and whoever expects soldiers, whether they be English, French, Germans or Boers, to act in the heat of battle as a gentleman would act in a London drawing room, has very little knowledge of the ferocity latent in human nature. When life and death are the stakes for which men play, chivalry and mercy are easily forgotten, and the original savage reappears, not much changed from the primeval time."

It is the "original savage" then that we are asked to resuscitate within us in the name of Christ! And this

savage spirit, of which I have given such abundant proof, is not a mere separable incident of war, — an abuse of war that could be eliminated, — but the essential spirit of war. There could be no war without it. One of our volunteer colonels in Cuba summed up the whole situation in a few words, when in a skirmish before Santiago he called upon his troops to "give the Spaniards hell!" I do not wonder at the words: any one might have used them under the same circumstances; but Christians have no business to sanction such circumstances.

Yes, war is hell, as General Sherman long ago told us; but he did not go on to tell us why. There is only one possible reason. Hell is not a geographical term; it is merely the expression of the spiritual condition of its inhabitants. War is hell because it transforms men into devils. And how naturally the terminology of hell accommodates itself to it! In different columns of a single copy of the New York *Herald*, describing, I think, different engagements, I read that the soldiers "fought like demons," and "yelled like fiends." It is all so natural that probably no one noticed it but myself. And so we found in the case of the burning Spanish ship the word "inferno" seemed the most appropriate.

War is hate. Christianity is love. On which side should the Church be ranged?

War is hell. The Church is, or ought to be, the kingdom of heaven. What possible truce can there be between them?

And yet it is a fact that the Church favors war. How many sermons do you recall condemning war, or even severely critical of it? A great movement against war has been going on in England during the past few years. I find among its leaders Frederick Harrison, the positivist, Herbert Spencer, the agnostic, and John Morley, the atheist, but nearly the whole bench of bishops has been on the side of bloodshed. In France the Church gave its unanimous support to the military conspiracy against Dreyfus, and left it to the free-thinking Zola to show "what Jesus would do." In Germany and Russia the Church is the mainstay of military despotism.

All the iniquities of the Russian government in the Russo-Japanese War have been blessed by the Holy Orthodox Church, and we have the marvelous spectacle of two nations, the one professing to follow Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and the other Buddha, who forbade all taking of life, even that of an insect, engaged in a titanic attempt to murder each other's sons. In Germany the Church is the mainstay of Prussian Junkerism and the insolent militarism of the standing army.

Is it true that things are so very different in America? We have seen a vigorous campaign conducted against war here since 1898. Has not the preponderating influence in the Church, where exerted at all, been exerted against peace, with only here and there a lonely voice in its favor? How many religious papers have steadily and consistently opposed war?

Perhaps my own experience will have some interest. I have frequently spoken in behalf of peace and have tried to base my arguments on what seemed to me to be the highest Christian principles. You will be surprised to learn that the "common people," as a rule, hear this message gladly. If you address a miscellaneous audience at the Cooper Institute in New York, for instance, — an audience of some fifteen hundred, composed neither of

blackguards nor gentlemen, — and tell them, as I have, that war is a relic of barbarism which has no business to show itself at the beginning of the twentieth century, they will cheer you to the echo, and scarcely a man will be found to make a protest. I have also spoken to audiences of educated Christians and I have found them cold. Only once were my hearers unanimous against me without an exception, and that was when I was invited to address a meeting of Protestant ministers. Every one admits that there have been such things as bad wars. Was there ever one so iniquitous that the Church did not give it her blessing? I am driven reluctantly to a conclusion which I only express under a grave sense of duty, and that is, that the churches have been up to the present time the chief strongholds in Christendom of the spirit of warfare. If they are changing now, as they are said to be in many places, it is certainly high time.

They tell us of Christian soldiers. Of course there have been Christian soldiers, just as there were Christian slave-holders, and a similar argument may be used to justify the continuance of any sinful custom. But it is as easy to quote the language of Christian soldiers against war as it is to cite their example in its favor. We have already referred to the testimony of General Howard's brother. Let us call General Gordon as a witness. Here are a few extracts from the diary in which he jotted down his deepest thoughts while he was in command in the Soudan:

"It is not the climate, it is not the natives, but it is the soldiery which is my horror."

"People have little idea how little glorious war is. It is organized murder, pillage and cruelty, and it is seldom that the weight falls on the fighting men; it is the women, children and old people."

"Some philanthropic people write to me about 'noble work,' 'poor blacks,' etc. I have, I think, stopped their writing by acknowledging ourselves to be a pillaging horde of brigands."

Why did General Gordon go on fighting then, if he knew it was wrong? He gives us the answer:

"You will say that I am most inconsistent, and so I am and so are you. We are dead against our words when it comes to action."

If every Christian soldier had been equally frank, we should probably have heard less of them as authorities for Christian warfare.

If a European and Christian general like Gordon could appreciate so justly the evil character of war, is it strange that Jew and Asiatic should note the discrepancy between our deeds and our professions?

A Japanese writer, Matsumura Kaiseki, uses this language in a recent article: "To the Oriental Christian there seems to be something absolutely contradictory in the Gospel preached by the missionaries and the action of their governments." And the eminent Jew, Max Nordau, is surprised to find that "The Church does not seem to see that it is blasphemy to ask of the God of love to look with favor upon murder and destruction." A Japanese nobleman of high standing recently said to a European: "For many years we have been sending to your countries the most exquisite examples of art, porcelain, enamel work, embroideries, and you have persisted in calling us barbarous; but now that we have killed

seventy thousand white men, you begin to admit us to a position of equality!" May we not have something to learn from Jew and "heathen?"

This backwardness of the Church to do the work of Christ, while those beyond the pale are endeavoring to accomplish it, has a precise analogy in the history of the anti-slavery movement. It was such "infidels" as Garrison and Phillips that were fulfilling the obligations of the Church fifty years ago, while she was searching the Scriptures to find authority for a sin which the world had outgrown. War is going to be condemned by the conscience of the world just as surely as slavery was condemned. I do not say that wars will cease. Murder and theft have not ceased, and they are condemned by mankind. But I do say that war will be adjudged a crime, like other murders and robberies, and that those who take part in it will know that they are doing wrong. The only question is, What instrument will God use in bringing this about? Shall we allow him to use the Church, or shall we ask him to look for other agents? It is because I believe the Church as a whole may still be persuaded to volunteer for this great task that I write these lines. Why was not the Church at the head of the movement to free the slaves? And why is she not to-day at the head of those who proscribe war as a survival of barbaric times?

This matter of war is not to be settled by passing resolutions nor by enacting a new commandment with its "Thou shalt not." What is the teaching of Jesus? "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." I know that he meant those words literally because they appeal to what is deepest in my being. Search into your innermost hearts and see if you do not find the truth of these words attested there. The cure for war lies in the legacy of love which Christ left to us, of boundless love for the Father and of boundless love for our fellow-men. We cannot love men with bombshells. May not the Church inspire in its members such a love for men—for Filipinos and Boers, for Japanese and Russian, and all other men—that it will be impossible for them even to think of such a thing as thrusting a bayonet into another's breast or slashing his face with a sabre! This does not seem to me an unattainable ideal as I write it down. All that we need to do is to become as little children and look at war afresh, free from all the prejudices that a perverted education has rooted in us. We condemn arson, adultery, murder, burglary, lying and theft. War includes them all, and in a form more exaggerated, more self-evidently wrong, than any one of them taken alone. War repeals the Ten Commandments and explicitly places a portion of the human race outside the universal obligation of Christian love.

Every age has had its barbarisms. We wonder now at slavery, at the hanging of boys for stealing a shilling, at imprisonment for debt, at the torture of witnesses, at the rack and thumbscrew and stake. All these things were supported by Christians and the Church. Are we to suppose that our age is the first without its sanctified barbarisms? And if not, what barbarism of the day is so conspicuous as war? No, it is an awful hallucination, a fatal delusion, that war can be Christian. Let us fill our hearts with love and look forth upon our enemies, if

we have enemies, with that love, and we shall see clearly that a Christian war is as impossible as a Christian murder.

## The Final Union of Mankind.

*(The following splendid passage is from the chapter on "The Cosmic Roots of Love" in Henry M. Simmons' recent book, "New Tables of Stone.")\**

The harmony of nations and the folly of their quarrels was taught more and more by eminent men, from Sully and Grotius onward. Voltaire wrote most earnestly against wars. Benjamin Franklin said there never had been and never would be a good one. Jeremy Bentham denounced war as "mischief on the largest scale." Robert Hall condemned it as "the temporary repeal of all the principles of virtue." Carlyle asked whether the French and English soldiers who "blow the souls out of one another" have any real reason for it; and he answered: "Busy as the devil is, not the slightest." Long before General Sherman, Channing said that a battlefield is a vast "exhibition of crime," and that "a more fearful hell in any region of the universe cannot well be conceived." Auguste Comte closed his "Positive Philosophy" with congratulation that the old evil was ending; and at about the same time Emerson wrote that "war is on its last legs" and "begins to look like an epidemic insanity." Charles Sumner called it "international lynch-law" with works "infinitely evil and accursed"; and he said that the greatest value of the Springfield Arsenal was that it had inspired Longfellow's poem against war. Theodore Parker wrote: "Posterity will damn into deep infamy that government which allows a war to take place in the middle of the nineteenth century." Even during our Mexican war, Parker denounced it as "mean and infamous"—as not only a great boy fighting a little one, but as a fight where "the big boy is in the wrong, and tells solemn lies to make his side seem right." So Lowell opposed that war of his own country, made Hosea Biglow "call it murder," and made Parson Wilbur rebuke it in behalf of a higher "patriotism" and of that truer country which is not territory, but justice. In 1848 and 1849, great peace congresses for international arbitration and disarmament met in Brussels and Paris. At the latter, Victor Hugo predicted the day when cannon would be obsolete and seen only in museums, as curiosities. Even England, during a whole generation of peace, had reached the "belief that wars were things of the past"; and Buckle soon after wrote that the national taste for them had become "utterly extinct."

The work of union continued, and even the wars that followed were sometimes in its favor. Our own Civil War was in the name of "the Union." Italy was at last united again. The great German empire was organized where hundreds of petty states had once opposed each other. But union has been advanced most by the peaceful processes of industry, trade, travel, intercourse of every kind. Victor Hugo contrasted the great Industrial Exposition at Paris, where the nations had come together to learn good from each other, with "that terrible inter-

\*"New Tables of Stone." By Henry M. Simmons. Boston: James H. West Company.